

MAY 21, 22, 1966

STATINTL

THREAT TO CIA

By DAVID LAWRENCE

WASHINGTON. — There is more than meets the eye in the innocent-looking proposal to allow the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to add three members of its own to the "legislative oversight" committee of the Senate which, in a confidential way, keeps in touch with LAWRENCE the operations of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Just why, for instance, should the Senate Foreign Relations Committee wish to check up on the special committee now composed of a small group from the Senate Armed Services Committee and the Appropriations Committee?

THE REASON given by Senator J. William Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, is that the people in the CIA "very greatly influence foreign policy."

But, in rebuttal, Senator Richard B. Russell, of Georgia, chairman of the special committee which now supervises CIA operations, says that "it is just pure poppycock that the CIA fixes, and makes, foreign policy."

On the surface, it might seem that the whole thing is merely a matter of procedure and that theoretically some representation from the Foreign Relations Committee, along with members of the Appropriations Committee and the Armed Services Committee, would be logical.

But the truth is that the operations of the Central Intelligence Agency could be imperilled if members of the Senate who are primarily interested in arguing about foreign policy were entrusted with the secrets of the agency.



It is customary for various Senators every now and then to divulge things they have learned in confidence about domestic policy. But with respect to what's going on in foreign countries, there has to be restraint.

IF THE information obtained by the CIA is dealt with casually and "leaked" to the press like domestic news, this could cause serious damage to American interests around the world.

The risks in changing the nature of the membership of the special committee that

keeps in touch with the CIA are considerable. The public knows hardly anything about the devious efforts of foreign governments to get secret data in Washington. They employ go-betweens who themselves may not know just who is behind the request for information that comes to them.

After long experience with the technique of keeping things really secret, the CIA has concluded that the fewer the people who know anything about the operation, the better in the long run.

AFTER WORLD WAR II was over, the late Admiral Ernest King, Chief of Naval Operations, told this correspondent that in two of the important engagements in the Pacific he never even told the Secretary of the Navy ahead of time that a certain battle plan was about to be put into operation.

"My job," he said, "was strictly within the armed services, and if the Secretary of the Navy wanted to find out what was coming, he could always ask the commander-in-chief—namely, the President of the United States."

THIS KIND OF caution is just as important in a "cold war" as in a "hot war." The President, of course, has access to everything the CIA is doing.

Senator Frank J. Lausche, Democrat of Ohio, says that, while Senator Russell's subcommittee has "distinguished itself" by not leaking information, the Foreign Relations Committee—of which he is a member—"distinguishes itself by the number of leaks that have come out of that committee."

Senator Russell thinks that overexposure of the CIA would make difficult the gathering of information, because it would cause many people to hesitate to help for fear of eventual reprisals if their identity became known.

The Georgia Senator, in his speech to the Senate this week, said that the mere discussion of what appears to be a jurisdictional squabble "has a tendency to chill" some of the CIA informants even in the national capital.

It takes many years to develop contacts in foreign countries, where the CIA operates almost entirely. To require the agency to reveal much of its information to members of the Senate, who are themselves involved in foreign-policy controversies, could result in a substantial drop in the efficiency of the organization.

STATINTL